

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 CIEP-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9751

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 2740

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, DA

SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVE PARTY MANIFESTATION OF UNITY

REF: COPENHAGEN 0261

SUMMARY: CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONGRESS MADE PROGRESS IN
RESOLVING ITS LEADERSHIP CRISIS BY UNANIMOUSLY ELECTING
POUL SCHLUTER PARTY CHAIRMAN, THUS COMBINING
PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LEADERSHIP AND PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP
IN ONE PERSON. CONGRESS PROPOSAL THAT DANISH GOVERNMENT
BE RESTRUCTURED TO INCLUDE OTHER NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES
WAS REJECTED IMMEDIATELY BY PRIMIN POUL HARTLING. END
SUMMARY.

1. THE PRIMARY CONCERN AT THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONGRESS,
SEPT 27 - 29 AS HELSINGOR, WAS THE LONG-STANDING CONFLICT BETWEEN
THE PARTY'S TRADITIONALIST AND PROGRESSIVE WINGS, A STRUGGLE
WHICH LAST YEAR THREATENED TO SPLIT THE PARTY AND
WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY CONTRIBUTED HEAVILY TO ITS
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CATASTROPIC LOSS IN DECEMBER 1973 ELECTION. TO HEAL

THIS DIVISION, LEADERS OF BOTH FACTIONS, ERIK NINN HANSEN OF THE TRADITIONALIST LAW AND ORDER WING (CHURCH, DEFENSE AND MONARCHY) AND ERIK HAUNSTRUP CLEMMENSEN OF THE PROGRESSIVE WING (INDIVIDUALISM AND PRIVATE INITIATIVE), HAD EARLIER ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTION TO WITHDRAW FROM ACTIVE LEADERSHIP ROLES (REFTTEL). LAST WEEK THE PARTY'S EXECUTIVE BOARD ENDORSED "COMPROMISE FIGURE", POUL SCHLUTER, FOR ELECTION AS NEW CHAIRMAN, NEVERTHELESS, AS CONGRESS GOT UNDER WAY THERE WAS APPREHENSION THAT THE OLD FACTIONALISM WOULD REAPPEAR. INSTEAD THE CONGRESS PROVED TO BE A MANIFESTATION OF PARTY UNITY AS HARRIS TROENSGAARD AND EMERGING FIGURE WITHIN PROGRESSIVE WING, AND FORMER DEFMIN KNUD OSTERGAARD WITHDREW THEIR NAMES FROM CONTENTION AND SCHLUTER WAS UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED BY ACCLAMATION.

2. SCHLUTER, 44, IS A COPENHAGEN LAWYER WHO HAS SERVED AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY GROUP SINCE LAST JANUARY. HIS ELECTION THUS COMBINES ROLES OF PARTY CHAIRMAN AND PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LEADER IN ONE PERSON. ALTHOUGH THIS REPRESENTS A BREAK WITH A 25-YEAR CONSERVATIVE PARTY TRADITION, THE EXECUTIVE BOARD CONSIDERED IT NECESSARY AT THIS TIME, AS TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT, FOR PURPOSES OF PROMOTING PARTY UNITY.

3. THE CONGRESS WAS, IN ACTUALITY, WELL MANAGED BY THE TRADITIONALIST POWER-BROKERS BEHIND THE PARTY. OSTERGAARD'S CANDIDACY WAS A TACTICAL MANEUVER TO INSURE THAT THE PROGRESSIVE WING DID NOT FIELD ANOTHER CANDIDATE OR ATTEMPT ONCE AGAIN TO DRAFT HAUNSTRUP CLEMMENSEN. SIGNIFICANTLY, OSTERGAARD WITHDREW HIS CANDIDACY IMMEDIATELY AFTER CLEMMENSEN HAD REITERATED HIS DETERMINATION NOT TO SEEK OFFICE. MOREOVER, OSTERGAARD, WHO IS EXTREMELY CONSERVATIVE, REINFORCED THE IMPRESSION THAT SCHLUTER WAS A COMPROMISE MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD CANDIDATE. IN FACT, SCHLUTER IS PRIVATELY CLOSE TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE TRADITIONALIST FACTION. IB STETTER, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, EMERGED AS A NEW POWER FIGURE WITHIN THE PARTY BY VIRTUE OF HIS ROLE AS CONTACT MAN FOR KRISTIAN MOGENSEN, THE COPENHAGEN LAWYER WHO MAINTAINS THE PARTY'S CONNECTIONS WITH ITS CONFIDENTIAL

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SUPPORTERS IN DANISH INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL LIFE.

4. STETTER WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MAJOR POLITICAL INITIATIVE TO COME OUT OF THE CONGRESS. HE PROPOSED THAT PRIMIN POUL HARTLING REORGANIZE HIS MINORITY MODERATE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT TO INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES WHICH HAD PROVIDED THE GOVERNMENT'S LACKING DURING THE MOST RECENT CRISIS. THIS SUGGESTION

WAS PROMPTLY REJECTED BY HARTLING ON THE GROUNDS THAT A SHIFT TO A COALITION GOVERNMENT WOULD ONLY MAKE SENSE IF THE COALITION COULD CONTROL A MAJORITY IN THE PARLIAMENT.

5. COMMENT: THE SELECTION OF SCHLUTER WAS THE RESULT OF A COMMON DESIRE TO BURY THE DIVISIVE LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE. THE PARTY REMAINS IN DEEP SHOCK OVER THE LOSS OF NEARLY HALF OF ITS PARLIAMENTARY SEATS, FROM 31 TO 16. THE CONGRESS, HOWEVER, CAREFULLY AVOIDED THE REAL ISSUES THAT DIVIDE THE TWO FACTIONS--THE PARTY'S ATTITUDE TOWARD COOPERATION WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, ON ONE HAND, AND WITH THE PROGRESS PARTY ON THE OTHER. THE DIVISION CONSEQUENTLY WAS MORE PAPERED OVER THE RESOLVED--A PROCESS THAT WILL TAKE SOME YEARS. IN THE MEANTIME, THE LEVERS OF POWER WITHIN THE PARTY REMAIN IN THE HANDS OF THE TRADITIONALIST WING. THE SELECTION OF NONE LEADER WILL TEND TO DAMPEN THE FRATRICIDAL FACTIONALISM WITHIN THE PARTY. SCHLUTER HAS NOT, HOWEVER, SHOWN IN THE MONTHS HE HAS SERVED AS PARLIAMENTARY GROUP CHAIRMAN THE CHARISMATIC QUALITY NECESSARY TO ENHANCE THE PARTY'S ELECTORAL APPEAL. GIVEN THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF ITS CLOSEST COMPETITORS, THE LIBERAL AND PROGRESS PARTIES, THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY REMAINS FAIRLY BLEAK.

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